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Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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DULWICH.—Since January 1st, the following meetings and lectures have taken place:—On March 2nd, at 4.30 p.m., the annual meeting of the branch was held at Tolisowa House, by kind invitation of Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Edwards. Mr. T. J. Edwards, who was in the chair, gave a short account of the work and progress of the branch during the past year; the members of the Committee, the Hon. Treasurer and Secretary, were re-elected. Miss Wragge, Principal of the Blackheath Kindergarten, then gave a most interesting lecture on "Kindergarten Principles and Practice and their application to school work."—On Tuesday, April 6th, a meeting was held at The Chestnuts, Dulwich Common, when Mrs. Clement Parsons read a very good paper on "A Child's Introduction to Poetry."—A course of classes on Brush-work by Miss Yeats, and two lectures on Natural History by Miss Simpson, of Leeds, have also been given.—The next session will begin in October.

READING.—A meeting of the Branch was held on July 3rd, at Norwood House, King's Road (by kind invitation of Dr. and Mrs. Hastings Gilford). The host presided, and introduced Mr. Richard Timberg, G.D., of Stockholm, who read a most able paper on "Physical Education." A lively discussion followed, in which the Chairman and many of the ladies and gentlemen present took part.—The next meeting will be at the end of September, when it is hoped that a lecture will be given by G. J. Burch, Esq., M.A., on the "Teaching of Natural Science." *Natural History Club*—An excursion took place on Saturday, July 10th, to view the collections of plants and animals at Park Place, Henley (by kind permission of Mrs. Noble). The party made the journey to Henley by rail, leaving Reading at 2.30 and returning at 7.15, after a most profitable and enjoyable outing.

THE PARENTS' REVIEW

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE
OF HOME-TRAINING AND CULTURE.

"Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life."

THE PLACE OF EXPERIENCE IN CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE.

BY E. M. CAILLARD.

THAT which we have experienced—which we know at first-hand (for experience is first-hand knowledge)—is to us a certainty beyond question. We are not able to doubt it; and therefore to be convinced by experience of the truth of any fact or facts, is to have received the strongest assurance regarding them of which we are capable. It is obvious, therefore, how important is the subject which I venture to propose for your consideration. The object of this Society is to press upon the attention of waverers and unbelievers the evidence on which the Christian faith reposes. It is right and necessary, then, to ask what place experience, the most irrefutable of all evidence, holds in it.

I must begin by stating, however, that the experience to which I desire to refer is not individual. That of course is to the individuals themselves absolutely convincing; but it is so to them alone. We cannot communicate the effect of our own experience to others. They must share it if they are to share the resistless strength of the conviction produced by it. Moreover, the experience of individual Christians is hardly a matter which can be rightly or wisely entered upon in public. It is too intimate and too sacred to be thus dealt with. But there is another experience,—one in which we all share and to which we all contribute,—the experience of the *race*—an organic whole, since mankind is an organic whole. It is to this experience and to its exceeding weight in Christian evidence that I desire to direct your attention.

It will clear the way if we begin by reminding ourselves of the place held by experience in other matters. And perhaps the very best analogy we can take is that of experience of the external world. We become aware of the latter by means of our senses, and the part they play is so important that we are apt to let it overshadow that of the understanding. We do not appreciate how much this has to do with experience, and are inclined to give our senses more than their fair share of credit. Yet a perception of sense, as Lotze very truly says, does not of itself tell us anything more than that we are feeling something or other which is to us intensely real. It does not give us any information about the outside world: our own intelligence does that by interpreting the feeling. And since human intelligence always works under conditions whose broad outlines are the same, sense and understanding between them give us an external world which is in certain great characteristic respects alike to all of us,—to savage and civilized man, to child and to adult. In other respects, however, it differs much. To take the case of the child and the adult.

A young child is not capable of seeing the facts of the external world in their true connection and bearing. He perceives the world in space and time, but he has very little notion of distance, perhaps still less of duration. An infant will clutch at the moon. A child slightly older still, shows hardly any appreciation of how far off an object in a landscape is. "Yesterday" seems to him already lost in the distant past; "next week" separated from him by a life-time. A true appreciation of perspective, both in time and space, some conception of a natural *order*, have to be acquired before the facts of the external world can be even apprehended so as to form a coherent whole of experience. For this reason we should not dream of relying on a child's experience as we do on the experience of a grown man. The same event would not appear to happen in the same kind of way to them, because they look upon it from such a very different point of view. But the man's point of view is the more comprehensive, the more rational, the more developed. It is that into which the child's will grow. Until this development has taken place, however, large regions of experience are positively shut out from the child, and others wear a wholly different

aspect from what they will do in later life. Things are passing before his eyes which he literally cannot perceive, or perceiving finds no meaning in. And yet the child's experience is real experience in its place and way: as absolutely convincing to him as that of any of his elders to them. Moreover it has something beyond a mere relative degree of validity, because it is not annihilated when the child becomes a man: it is the basis of his mature experience which without it would not have come into existence.

A case similar to the child and the adult is that of the savage and the civilized man. We are very apt to look down with contempt from our superior height of knowledge and culture upon the crude notions of primitive man; but as Mr. Jevous has pointed out in his recent most interesting work, *An Introduction to the History of Religion*, "the assured triumphs of modern science are linked to the despised speculations of the savage by a chain which may be ignored, but cannot be snapped." The experience of primitive man has grown into the experience of civilization and science, as the experience of the child grows into that of the adult; but as in the latter case so in the former, until this development has taken place, man cannot enter upon the experience of maturity. The things of the child cannot be put away. And when they are put away, when the period of maturity is reached, we do not rely on the experience of all men equally. In every region of knowledge we give most credence to those whose perception and intelligence have been trained and disciplined in the direction needful.

Bearing these considerations in mind, let us turn to that of which experience of the external world is to serve as an analogy,—experience of God. And first, what in this region corresponds to the perceptions of sense? The answer is not uncertain; those emotions, fears, hopes, desires, enthusiasms, which, in some form or other, man in all ages and under all conditions of ignorance and knowledge has felt, and has referred to a supernatural object or objects. This universality of what we may call the spiritual perceptions, would at no very distant period have been held unproved. Such is not the case now. There may be individual exceptions answering to those who are deprived, in some one or more directions, of the normal sense-perceptions—the blind or deaf, for

instance. But that is all which can be allowed. The vast additions made to anthropological science within the present generation have placed beyond question the fact of the existence of some form or other of religion among all races of mankind; and have moreover rendered it exceedingly doubtful whether they ever really originated in ancestor or ghost worship. That many of these forms were and are exceedingly crude, that even the highly developed religions of the various ancient and modern civilizations fall, with one exception, far short of what man's maturity requires, cannot be denied. The fact that they do so, brings us to the point to which the foregoing considerations have been intended to lead, viz., that the claim made by the one exception, by Christianity, is that *it is the religion of man's maturity*, adapted not to the childhood, but to the manhood of the race. In the time remaining let us see whether this claim is justified.

And first observe that to give this pre-eminence to Christian experience of God does not invalidate all other experience of Him. That may be true so far as it goes, true at early or earlier stages of spiritual development, true in the same way that the child's experience and the savage's experience of the external world is true,—and having the same kind of validity; but it is superseded as development takes place.

Next observe that our spiritual perceptions like the perceptions of sense do not of themselves make us aware of anything more than a condition of our own feeling. It is in the interpretation that we are able to put upon them that the information we receive, *i.e.*, that our experience consists. And here the analogy which will help us most is not that of our experience of inanimate nature, but of our fellow-men. Nature does not come forward to respond to our enquiries; she allows us to make them and to find out the answers, but that is all. Our fellow-men meet our efforts to understand them in a very different way; they are personal beings, *self-revealing* as only personal beings can be. Consequently the feelings with which we regard them are correspondingly different to those with which we regard inanimate nature. Intelligence alone would not enable us to understand our fellow-men. Our whole nature is brought into play and goes out towards them, meeting with its due

response. The love or the fear, the sympathy or the antipathy, which we feel in intercourse with our fellows, is such as could only be aroused by personal beings, and such as only personal beings could experience. Now those impressions which we call spiritual are pre-eminently of the personal kind. They are just such emotions, desires, terrors, as personal intercourse awakens. Therefore, man refers them to a personal God or, in the lower stages of spiritual and intellectual development, gods. I think it is quite safe to say that *experience* has never impelled man to think of the Divine Being as impersonal. The necessities or supposed necessities of abstract thought may have done so, but we are not here concerned with these. And with regard to the one great example which might be cited in opposition to this statement, viz., Buddhism, I think it would not be difficult to show that no just inference from experience, but despair at experience being what it is, led its great founder to make a religion of the renunciation of that which alone renders religion possible, personality in man and in God.

To attribute personality to God carries with it the consequence that men expect of Him a self-revelation. And as a matter of fact every religion claims to be based on such a self-revelation. Man has never supposed that he could know God unless God made Himself known. A revelation of God could not be adequately made, however, could not be made so that it should really show man what God is, until man was ready for it, until he had learned what he needed in God. The analogy of childhood may again help us here. There are experiences which the child cannot have because he is a child,—facts altogether beyond the range of his appreciation, and if we try prematurely to press them upon him, we either entirely fail in doing so, or hopelessly confuse him. A wise parent will allow the child as he grows in understanding to seek for himself fresh experience, and will only set broader facts and deeper knowledge before him as his capacity expands to embrace them. This is how the Divine Father has dealt with man. He has allowed him to find out for himself what his religious needs were, what the difficulties which confronted him at every stage of his development, what the great practical problems which pressed everywhere for solution; and then He answered them in

the only way in which they could be answered—by a *self-revelation*. Many teachers before and since Christ have tried to interpret to man his spiritual experience; but not one of these has ventured to say more than: *I bring the Revelation*. Christ said: "*I am the Revelation*"; and nothing less than this, nothing less than the assurance that God is revealing (God could satisfy the human heart and intelligence, longing for union with the Divine, and yet repudiating (as when growing to maturity they must repudiate), the suggestion that God is made in the likeness of man. It has been well said that "Jesus Christ did not satisfy our minds with arguments. He did not solve objections The Gospel lies in His Person." It does so because He is that which so many who call themselves Christians undermine their own position by denying, *very God*. Consequently He rests the great truths of God's Fatherhood to man, of His universal love to His Creation, on the only secure foundation, the Divine Being Itself. "Before the mountains were brought forth," says the psalmist, "or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God." Unless then we are given the assurance that from everlasting to everlasting He is the Father, how can we tell that His Fatherhood is more than a shadow cast by our own weakness over the unfathomable abyss that separates the Creator from the creature; a symbol standing for some inconceivable reality, to which it bears no more resemblance than the x of a mathematical formula to the quantity it represents. Our heart and our flesh cry out for the living God, not for a shadow or a symbol; and therefore it is that we can find no assurance of the sonship of the creature save in the sonship of Him Who is God of God.

It was then a new experience which Christ gave to mankind,—the experience of certainty with regard to Him in whom we live and move and have our being, and yet Who if Christ had not come must have remained for ever the unknown God. It is sometimes objected that the Incarnation breaks in upon the course of nature by its isolation and uniqueness. The Christian belief (and indeed if we will be at the pains to understand it, it is a most reasonable belief), is that the course of nature is fulfilled in the Incarnation. Time forbids any attempt to follow out this line of thought

here. But what is certain is that in human lives (and undoubtedly we regard these as included within the course of nature), unique experiences are common. There can hardly be a person here present, who is not able to look back upon some one experience at least—perhaps very brief, to be counted it may be by minutes only—which was altogether new, and of such transcendent importance that it altered the whole set and current of inner if not of outer life. What such experiences as these are to individuals, the Incarnation has been to the race, a unique occurrence whose issues are beyond human calculation.

It was experience which convinced the first disciples of Jesus Christ that He was what He claimed to be. It is experience which has convinced all those who have been convinced ever since,—who have gone beyond the bare intellectual assent which has no constraining, empowering effect upon life, and have embraced with their whole being,—for it appeals to their whole being,—the Christian Gospel.

And here the remark will in all probability be made that these have ever been in a minority. Far from the whole race having shared in Christian experience, not half the race is even nominally Christian; and among nominal Christians dare we say that even half is anything more? What can be meant then by asserting that the experience of the race is such a strong element in Christian evidence?

It is not always the experience of the multitude which is most convincing, most valid, most representative of that which the race is capable of. The position of science demonstrates so much. For after all are not those who can appreciate scientific facts in a minority? Are not those who can weigh and test them in a yet smaller minority? And yet would not he be in the wrong who should take the voice of the multitude as interpreting rightly the external world, rather than the voice of those who by virtue of their trained perceptions and intelligence claim to have gone further in testing this experience than their fellows who have been at no such pains, or who have had no such opportunities?

It is true, however, that scientific experience does often appear to contradict ordinary experience, as when it tells us that colour does not reside in the objects which we perceive as coloured. I think Christian experience is not chargeable

with this same difficulty. It supersedes other spiritual experience, not by contradicting it, but by taking it up into itself, illuminating, expanding, explaining it. Thus the idea of sacrifice, which we find in some form or other pervading all attempts on the part of man to approach God, is not done away with; on the contrary, it is made central and raised to an altogether higher level: "Lo! I come to do Thy will, O God." The perfect fulfilment of the Father's will, the perfect obedience "even unto death," the absolute self-surrender which constitute the sacrifice of Christ, are the interpretation to man of what he meant, or was trying to mean, through the long ages of faulty and mistaken, often hideous and bloody rites, in which a superficial student of the history of religion sees only matter for condemnation.

And again, the antithetical ideas that human nature is in some way akin to the Divine nature, so that it must be possible for man to enter into relation with God; and, on the other hand, that His ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts, that He dwells in the Light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen nor can see, this antithesis also is resolved in Christ. For true though it is that "no man hath seen God at any time," yet it is also true that "the Only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him," emptying Himself, and becoming in the likeness of man so that He might express God to us in the only terms which we could understand—"terms of humanity." And by so doing He revealed the great truth which man had all along been feeling after and yet had so miserably travestied; the truth that He is made in the image of God, and that the goal of his development is realized Sonship to the Divine Father.

These truths are very familiar to us; they admit of being quite simply stated; they have been and they are the stay and comfort of thousands upon thousands of unlearned and uncultivated men and women. Yet they are so deep and so comprehensive that all the resources of philosophy cannot plumb their meaning or adequately formulate them. For in fact they are not capable of formulation. No truth that reaches down to the depths of man's being can be, for it becomes a contact of life with life; and life in its essence, in its power, in its all-embracing scope, is beyond the touch of formulæ. It is known through experience or not at all.

AT SCHOOL ON HAMPSTEAD HEATH.

BY MRS. GRINDROD.

(Continued from page 349.)

GEOLOGY is, as Sir Archibald Geikie shows in his excellent book on *The Teaching of Geography*, the proper basis of all study of Nature; but from the first other branches of natural history will demand attention also. And if the interconnections of all branches of science can be kept in view all along so much the better educationally. The boy may one day ask why all the fir trees grow on the top of the Heath, and why the willows grow in the damp hollows, and the ability of the firs to live in sand and of the willows to live in water,—even right in the water, as we see them in the winter floods round Oxford,—may lead to many a pleasant talk about plants and their habits; about the beeches which grow so well in the chalk of the Chilterns that all the villages round Wycombe are engaged in making the parts of beech-wood chairs; about the beds of willow osiers grown for basket-making in the many channels of the Thames; about the inability of rhododendrons and azaleas to grow in the soil of limestone districts, and so on, indefinitely. Every tree and shrub that grows on the Heath may become a recognised friend in a few seasons, and it will be the boy's delight to observe all the changes of bud, blossom and fruit, and to note the various kinds of bark, modes of branching, shapes of leaves, and forms of flower and fruit. Self-made drawings and modellings of leaves and fruits will help to fix at home the impressions gained outside, and the mania for collection, to which all children fall a victim, may be indulged in to some extent, as far as the leaves and fruits of trees are concerned. But the flowering shrubs and herbs on the Heath are so exceedingly precious that no collection even of leaves should be allowed, but the form and habitat of each plant should be noted as it appears and the common name learnt. And then in summer holidays the study of the fields and hedgerows will be an intense delight; for